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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2421 (2018), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since my previous report, dated 9 July 2018 (S/2018/677), and the briefing to the Security Council by my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI on 8 August.

II. Summary of key political developments

A. Political situation

2. On 9 August 2018, the Independent High Electoral Commission's Board of Judges announced the provisional results of the parliamentary elections held in Iraq on 12 May. The announcement followed the completion of a partial manual recount, which led to minimal changes to the original results that were first announced by the Independent High Electoral Commission on 19 May. On 19 August, the Federal Supreme Court officially certified the election results, marking the start of the 90-day constitutional timetable for convening the Council of Representatives (the parliament) and forming the Government. In accordance with constitutional requirements, on 27 August the President of Iraq, Fuad Masum, issued a decree inviting the new Council of Representatives to convene its first session within the constitutional time frame.

3. On 3 September, the fourth Council of Representatives under the Constitution of 2005 held its inaugural session under the chairmanship of the eldest parliamentary member and interim Speaker, Mohammed Ali al-Zaini. Following a swearing-in ceremony, the new parliamentarians aimed to proceed with the formation of the largest parliamentary bloc and the election of a new Speaker and the two Deputy Speakers, in accordance with constitutional requirements. Two parliamentary blocs subsequently submitted their respective lists to the interim Speaker: the "Reform and Construction" bloc formed by Muqtada al-Sadr (Sa'iron Alliance), Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi (Nasr (Victory Alliance)), Ammar al-Hakim (National Wisdom Movement), Iyad Allawi (Wataniya Alliance) and Osama al-Nujaifi (Iraqi Decision

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Alliance); and the "Construction" bloc formed by Nouri al-Maliki (State of Law), Hadi al-Amiri (Fatah) and individual parliamentarians previously affiliated with Nasr, the Iraqi Decision Alliance, the Wataniya Alliance and other groups. With each of the two blocs claiming to be the largest and thus entitled to form the Government, there was controversy over whether individual parliamentarians could join other political parties after the ratification of the election results. Amid legal and procedural disagreements, recommendations were made to seek the advice of the Federal Supreme Court as to which of the two blocs had the largest number of seats. The interim Speaker announced that the session would resume the following day, but on 4 September, the Council failed to convene due to the lack of a quorum. After consulting with the heads of the parliamentary blocs, the interim Speaker announced that the first session would resume on 15 September.

4. The emergence of two parliamentary blocs, each claiming authority to form the Government, reflects the political fragmentation that has characterized the negotiations on government formation. The two Shia election frontrunners, Muqtada al-Sadr (Sa'iron Alliance) and Hadi al-Amiri (Fatah) have been competing to win the parliamentary majority. While the Fatah coalition reached out to Sunni and Kurdish parties to establish the "Construction" bloc, the Sa'iron Alliance consolidated the "Reform and Construction" bloc with the National Wisdom Movement, Nasr and Wataniya Alliance coalitions on 19 August. Earlier, on 14 August, prominent Sunni leaders, including Osama al-Nujaifi and Khamis al-Khanjar (Iraqi Decision Alliance), Jamal al-Karbouli (Al-Hal) and Salim al-Jubouri (Wataniya Alliance), had announced the formation of the "Mihwar al-Watani Alliance" to engage in negotiations as a single Sunni entity, but individual negotiations with the two larger blocs eventually led to the splitting of that Alliance. Divisions have also remained among the Kurdish political parties, both between the two larger parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and between those two parties and smaller opposition parties, including the Movement for Change (Gorran) and the Coalition for Democracy and Justice.

5. The first session of the Council of Representatives resumed on 15 September with the aim of electing the new Speaker and the two Deputy Speakers. By the time of voting, the list of candidates for the Speaker position had narrowed to three individuals: Mohammed al-Halbousi (Al-Hal), Khalid al-Obaidi (Nasr) and Osama al-Nujaifi (Iraqi National Decision). Securing 169 votes cast in a secret ballot, Mohammed al-Halbousi was elected the new Speaker. The posts of the First and Second Deputy Speakers went to Hassan al-Kaabi (Sa'iron Alliance) and Bashir Haddad (Kurdistan Democratic Party), respectively.

6. On 17 September, the Council of Representatives called for the candidates for the position of President of Iraq to submit their applications by 23 September, in accordance with the constitutional time frame. For the first time under the Constitution, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan did not present a common presidential candidate. The Kurdistan Democratic Party nominated Fuad Hussein, the current Chief of Staff to the President of the Kurdistan Region, while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan nominated its former member Barham Salih. Notably, an independent female politician, Sarwa Abdul Wahid (formerly Movement for Change (Gorran)), nominated herself for the Presidency, as did many other female candidates.

7. On 2 October, the Council of Representatives held a voting session to elect the new President. Among 20 candidates, Barham Salih and Fuad Hussein received the highest number of votes, 165 and 89 respectively. Female candidate Sarwa Abdul Wahid received 18 votes. As no candidate achieved the required two-thirds majority, the new Speaker called for a second round of voting with the two leading candidates. In the second round, Barham Salih garnered the required majority with 219 votes.

Fuad Hussein obtained 22 votes. Thereafter, Barham Salih was sworn in as President of Iraq before the Council of Representatives.

8. Following his election, the President held a meeting with the new Speaker, the Chair of the Federal Supreme Court, Medhat al-Mahmoud, representatives of the "Reform and Construction" and the "Construction" parliamentary blocs and former Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi in order to discuss the nomination of the Prime Minister-designate. Upon an agreement between and the recommendation of the two largest alliances, the President appointed Adil Abdul-Mahdi as the Prime Minister-designate, charging him with forming a new Government within the 30-day constitutional timeline.

9. Demonstrations intensified over the lack of basic services in southern Iraq during the reporting period. On 20 August, owing to water contamination and the deteriorating health and environmental situation, the Independent High Commission for Human Rights called on the Government to declare Basrah a "disaster area". Street protests resumed and, though they were initially peaceful, violent incidents began occurring in early September. Incidents included clashes between the protesters and the security forces, the burning of official and political party buildings, attacks against the Consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Basrah and the Basrah headquarters of the popular mobilization forces, as well as indirect fire in the vicinity of the Consulate of the United States of America in Basrah and the United States Embassy in Baghdad. On 7 September, protests were reported in Baghdad. On 25 September, a female civil activist was shot dead in Basrah. On 28 September, the United States decided to close and evacuate its Consulate in Basrah Governorate owing to security concerns.

10. Many political parties and leaders expressed grave concerns about the situation in Basrah, urging the Government to ensure the safety of the protesters and to respond to the legitimate demands of citizens. Notably, in a televised speech on 6 September, Muqtada al-Sadr called on the new Council of Representatives to hold an extraordinary session to discuss possible actions. On 8 September, the Council held its first extraordinary session under the interim Speaker and in the presence of Prime Minister Al Abadi, the Ministers for Health, Interior, Electricity, Water Resources and Reconstruction, as well as the Governor of Basrah, Asaad al-Aidani. The Council agreed on several measures to support the people of Basrah, including the deployment of a ministerial team to oversee the implementation of those measures, the release of funds to the Governorate, the provision of support for civil society reconstruction initiatives and the promotion of dialogue with youth on reforms.

11. The Government has sustained its efforts to address the demands of citizens, taking a series of administrative and security measures. On 10 September, the Prime Minister led a ministerial delegation to Basrah. In the wake of his visit, the Government issued a number of resolutions pertaining to the maintenance and rehabilitation of water and sewage facilities, the provision of funds and materials, the distribution of food allowances and the development of procedures to address unemployment in Basrah. As part of security measures, on 28 September, the Prime Minister ordered immediate action by the Ministry of Interior to investigate recent incidents of assassination and kidnapping in Basrah, Baghdad and other locations. On 2 October, the Prime Minister stated that 2,000 additional security personnel had been deployed to Basrah and called for an evaluation of the performance of provincial police forces. On 18 September, the new Speaker visited Basrah to discuss the situation with governorate officials. On 27 September, the Council of Representatives endorsed a series of recommendations, including a proposal to investigate the performance of the Ministers for Health, Water Resources and Municipalities and to request those ministries to develop a strategic plan to resolve the crisis in Basrah.

12. On 30 September, the Kurdistan Region held its fourth parliamentary elections, which were the first electoral process to be conducted by the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission. Field reports gathered by the Commission indicated that all 5,941 polling stations in 1,260 polling centres throughout the Region opened and closed on time. In addition, on 28 September, 471 polling stations in 99 polling centres were set up for the use of security forces, so they could vote in advance. Of approximately 3 million eligible voters, the Commission reported voter turnout at 58.0 per cent for regular voting and 91.7 per cent for special voting by security forces. A total of 773 candidates belonging to 29 entities ran for 111 seats. A total of 241 female candidates (31 per cent) ran for election, in line with Kurdistan parliamentary election law, which stipulates that 30 per cent of parliamentary seats be allocated to women.

13. Election day unfolded, by and large, in a peaceful and orderly fashion across the Kurdistan Region. In the days that followed, allegations of fraud and vote-rigging surfaced. On 1 October, the New Generation Movement stated it would reject the results of the elections and boycott the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region because of the alleged fraud.

14. On 1 October, the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission announced that the results of the elections would be issued only after all complaints filed by political entities had been settled. On 3 October, the Commission stated that it would delay the announcement of the preliminary results owing to outstanding complaints. On 4 October, based on a tally of 85 per cent of the ballot, partial results were announced indicating the number of votes garnered by various coalitions and political parties. The Commission has yet to announce the final results.

B. Relations between Baghdad and Erbil

15. Deliberations between the federal Government and Kurdistan Regional Government over outstanding issues were overshadowed by the negotiations on government formation. Nonetheless, progress occurred on issues related to oil and transport. On 14 August, the Federal Supreme Court held a session to rule on an appeal over the unconstitutionality of the Kurdistan Region extracting oil from its territory for direct sale. The lawsuit was brought by the Iraqi Minister for Oil against the Kurdistan Region Minister for Natural Resources. The Court ruled that the case included technical aspects which required the expertise of a legal specialist and decided to postpone the hearing until such a specialist was designated. On 3 October, the Federal Supreme Court announced that it had appointed three oil experts, who were expected to submit their report on 6 November.

16. On 19 August, the main road connecting Erbil and Kirkuk was officially reopened. It had been closed since 16 October 2017 during clashes between Kurdish Peshmerga and Iraqi security forces.

17. Also on 19 August, the Sunni Mihwar al-Watani Alliance visited Erbil to discuss the political process in Iraq, including the formation of the new Government. The Alliance met separately with the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Masoud Barzani, and a joint delegation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. They reiterated the need for a political agreement with written guarantees and commitments to be respected by all political parties. They decided to continue a collaborative relationship and maintain active participation in the political process. On 25 August, the Mihwar al-Watani Alliance confirmed that negotiations with the Kurdish side had reached an advanced stage in preparation for the signing of a document that could be the basis for rebuilding the State.

18. The following day, on 26 August, a joint delegation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan met with President Masum in Baghdad to consult on the formation of a large parliamentary bloc in preparation for the formation of the new Government. The delegation visited Baghdad again on 1 September to meet with political parties.

19. On 27 August, a joint delegation comprising members of Sa'iron Alliance, Nasr, National Wisdom Movement and Wataniya Alliance coalitions visited Erbil and met with Masoud Barzani and a joint delegation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. The topics discussed included the formation of the new Government, the programme of the new Iraqi Council of Representatives and ways to build partnership to administer the country, implement the Constitution, respond to the demands of protesters in the southern governorates, reconstruct the liberated areas and enhance social justice.

20. On 4 October, Hadi al-Amiri (Fatah) visited Erbil and met Masoud Barzani, Kurdish Regional Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and Kurdish Regional Security Council Chair Masrour Barzani. The topics discussed included the participation of all Kurdistan parties in the government formation process, which would facilitate addressing outstanding issues between Erbil and Baghdad.

C. Security situation

21. Operations conducted by Iraqi security forces during the reporting period concentrated on pursuing remnants of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in northern and north-central Iraq, in conjunction with ongoing efforts to clear liberated areas of explosives and other hazardous materials. The capacity of Iraqi security forces to remove armed elements from cleared areas, or at least to suppress insurgent activity, is vital to the country's transition from recovery to reconstruction.

22. Iraqi civilians continue to bear the brunt of the insecurity in the country. Meanwhile, asymmetric attacks continue to target the Iraqi security forces in northern and north-central Iraq (Ninawa, Salah al-Din and Kirkuk) and in the central region (Diyala, Anbar and Baghdad).

23. In northern Iraq, Turkish airstrikes against Kurdistan Workers' Party targets continued along the border between Iraq and Turkey. On 15 August, the Armed Forces of Turkey reported the killing of Ismail Özden, a leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Sinjar. In reaction to the airstrikes, hundreds of Yazidis demonstrated on 16 August in Sinuni, demanding the establishment of a no-fly zone in Sinjar. On 17 August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the Turkish attacks on Sinjar and denied any coordination between Baghdad and Ankara on the airstrikes. The Ministry urged Turkey to withdraw its ground forces from Ba'shiqah as, in its stated view, their presence violated international conventions and mutual respect for territorial sovereignty. On 18 August, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, stated that military operations would continue along the southern borders of Turkey, including inside the Sinjar and Makhmur districts of Iraq. Between 22 August and 5 September, Turkish airstrikes targeted the northern Governorates of Dahuk and Erbil. Turkish forces have reported that the attacks resulted in the deaths of more than 20 Kurdistan Workers' Party members. On 16 September, the Prime Minister of Iraq ordered the deployment of Iraqi federal border guards along the Iraq-Turkey border to protect the border and prevent violations of national sovereignty. He instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to document and report such violations to the United Nations and the National Security Council.

24. On 6 September, protesters in Basrah set fire to a number of government, media and political party buildings. No casualties were reported. On 7 September, unknown

perpetrators attacked and set fire to the Consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Basrah (the Consulate has in the meantime been reopened in other premises). Protesters then attacked and set fire to the headquarters of the popular mobilization forces. During the night of 7 and 8 September, three mortars struck the International Zone in Baghdad in the vicinity of the United States Embassy. On the same day, four mortars were fired towards the United States Consulate in Basrah, next to Basrah airport. On 28 September, another instance of indirect fire was reported in the vicinity of the United States Consulate in Basrah. On the same day, the United States decided to close and evacuate its Consulate in Basrah over security concerns.

25. On 8 September, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps fired seven short-range surface-to-surface missiles at the headquarters of two Iranian opposition groups in Kuyah, northern Iraq. At least 11 persons affiliated with those groups were reportedly killed. In reaction, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim Al-Jafari, underlined the country's opposition to Iranian bombings of Iranian Kurdish communities on Iraqi soil.

26. During the reporting period, disputes arose over the structure and deployment of the popular mobilization forces. On 2 and 18 August, the Deputy Director of the Popular Mobilization Commission, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, issued three orders on the restructuring and redeployment of the popular mobilization forces, commencing in Sunni-populated areas of Ninawa. On 9 August, the popular mobilization forces began to withdraw from the Rabi'a and Zummar subdistricts of Tall Afar and from parts of Sinjar. On 21 August, the Prime Minister cancelled the orders, recalling that the Popular Mobilization Commission leadership did not have the legal authority to reorganize or redeploy the popular mobilization forces without prior consultation with the Commander-in-Chief and coordination with the Iraqi Joint Operations Command. On 24 August, the Prime Minister's office released a statement highlighting that the removal of popular mobilization forces units from large cities should not be subject to political pressure and that redeployments might offer an opportunity for terrorists to launch attacks. On 3 September, the Prime Minister declared that he would henceforth head the Popular Mobilization Commission.

D. Regional and international developments

27. There have been widespread calls among the international community for the swift formation of an inclusive, non-sectarian and pro-reform Government to respond to the aspirations of the Iraqi people. Neighbouring countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, transmitted congratulatory messages to the new Iraqi government officials for their election wins and appointments. On 3 October, the new Speaker of the Council of Representatives participated in the Arab Parliament Conference held in Cairo, where he expressed his country's aspirations for stronger relations with Arab States with regard to economic issues and fighting global terrorism.

28. In early September, escalating violence in the southern part of Iraq resulted in calls, including by the European Commission and regional neighbours, for calm and restraint on the part of the Iraqi security forces.

29. The Government of Iraq has continued to seek support from neighbouring countries and the wider international community, including the international counter-ISIL coalition and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to address the country's urgent economic, political and security challenges. The Prime Minister, accompanied by the Ministers for Oil, Agriculture and Water Resources, met the President of Turkey in Ankara on 14 August to discuss issues related to trade, transboundary water quotas, agriculture, energy and security. Reportedly, the

President of Turkey committed to providing Iraq with its water quota in full. Condemning attacks by the Kurdistan Workers' Party against neighbouring countries, the Prime Minister of Iraq stated that the National Security Council had prepared a plan to prevent such attacks through joint control of the borders with Turkey. He also expressed support for the reopening of Turkish consulates in Basrah and Mosul and the opening of a second border-crossing point on the Iraq-Turkey border to expand oil exports through Turkey.

30. On 7 August, the Prime Minister stated that although Iraq considered the sanctions by the United States on the Islamic Republic of Iran a strategic mistake, it would abide by them to protect its own interests. The next day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement calling on the international community to exert pressure on the United States Administration to withdraw the sanctions. The Prime Minister clarified, on 13 August, that his previous statement had only referred to transactions in United States dollars with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and that the Central Bank of Iraq had issued a directive to that effect. On 28 August, the Government of Iraq said it would send a delegation to the United States to request sanctions exemptions for Iraq.

31. On 1 and 2 September, Iraq hosted a meeting of the quadrilateral alliance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic to discuss joint efforts in the fight against ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Following the Prime Minister's request for further NATO support, and the approval of a NATO training mission for Iraq earlier in the year, Iraq welcomed the decision by NATO to support the professionalization of the Iraqi security forces through the establishment of military schools. In addition, Operation Inherent Resolve issued a statement on 19 August confirming that United States troops remained committed to providing support for Iraq on the ground, an effort deemed essential for stabilization efforts and cooperation against ISIL.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

32. My Special Representative for Iraq and my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance continued to engage with the Independent High Electoral Commission, representatives of political parties, government officials, parliamentarians, women's groups, civil society, religious and community leaders. On 9 August, the Independent High Electoral Commission's Board of Judges announced the final electoral results. Throughout the recount process, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance visited recount centres in Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk. Throughout the recount process, an experienced team of United Nations electoral experts provided advice and assistance.

33. In anticipation of the formation of the new Government, my Special Representative met with numerous political leaders and actors, as well as the newly elected Council of Representatives in Baghdad. My Special Representative visited Amman, Tehran and Washington, D.C., to seek regional and international support for an inclusive and balanced Government in Iraq, and also held high-level meetings in New York on the margins of the General Assembly. My Special Representative urged the newly elected parliamentarians to assume their duties and act responsibly without delay in the government formation process.

34. As part of the Mission's advocacy efforts to promote effective participation and representation of women in political and decision-making processes in Iraq, my

Special Representative and my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance met separately with Iraqi women who ran for election to the Council of Representatives. Similarly, they also met with women activists from the Iraqi Women Network and from Alliance 1325, each of which comprised more than 200 civil society representatives, lawyers, academics and media activists. Discussions with parliamentarians focused on their efforts and vision for working collaboratively across the political spectrum, including the possible establishment of a women's parliamentary caucus to promote and strengthen gender equality in Government programmes, the inclusion of women in leading positions and the adoption of laws that would help advance women's rights. My Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative continued to meet with the heads of political blocs to advocate for the meaningful inclusion of women in the government formation negotiations and their representation at all levels of decision-making in the executive branch.

35. On 3 October, a cross-sector task force on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), with support from Euromed Feminist Initiative, organized a high-level consultation meeting to develop a second national action plan on implementing Council resolution 1325 (2000). My Special Representative impressed on political leaders the need to deliver on their pledges to empower women and advance their rights as part of the democratic entitlement of all Iraqis, thus strengthening equal representation and inclusiveness.

36. In the lead-up to the parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance and the UNAMI office tasked with managing electoral affairs continued to engage with the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission to discuss progress on preparations for the elections and respond to the Commission's request for the provision of United Nations technical support, in line with the Mission's mandate and resources.

37. My Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance met with members of the Black Iraqi, Baha'i, Zoroastrian, Christian and Shabak communities in Basrah, Erbil and Ninawa as part of efforts by UNAMI to address the concerns of the diverse ethnic and religious minority communities of Iraq. In line with those efforts, my Deputy Special Representative addressed the first international conference on the human rights abuses committed against the Yazidi that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and, possibly, genocide, supporting the efforts of Iraqi and Kurdistan Region authorities to tackle impunity and bring to justice the perpetrators of those horrendous crimes.

B. Electoral assistance

38. On 9 August, the Board of Judges appointed to conduct the recount process announced the provisional results of the parliamentary elections of 12 May. During the subsequent appeal period, a total of 253 appeals were received and forwarded by the Independent High Electoral Commission to the Electoral Judicial Panel. On 16 August, the Panel completed the adjudication of all 253 appeals, well ahead of the 10-day legal time limit, which triggered the submission of the results for certification by the Federal Supreme Court. On 19 August, the Federal Supreme Court formally endorsed the list of the 329 newly elected parliamentarians, marking the start of the constitutionally mandated timeline for convening the Council of Representatives and the subsequent government formation process.

39. In line with the provisions of the third amendment to the Council of Representatives electoral law, the task of the assigned Board of Judges ended upon the certification by the Federal Supreme Court of the final election results. Although

the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission tried to resume their duties, they were barred from doing so owing to an ongoing investigation initiated by the Government concerning fraud allegations during the holding of the elections.

40. The Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission managed preparations for the holding of regional parliamentary elections on 30 September. Pursuant to a memorandum of understanding signed between the Iraqi and Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commissions, the latter submitted letters to the former requesting United Nations support in organizing the regional parliamentary elections. Support by UNAMI was requested and provided in the areas of data transfer and entry, the tabulation of results, electoral complaints and dispute resolution. On 15 August, the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission published the names of 773 candidates, 241 of whom were women. The Kurdistan Commission also announced the start of the process of recruiting more than 42,000 staff for election day.

41. In addition to providing electoral technical expertise, UNAMI also deployed teams of election watchers on election day. They visited scores of polling centres and stations in all the governorates of the Kurdistan Region to get a snapshot of election day developments. My Special Representative visited polling location in Erbil, and my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance visited polling locations in Sulaymaniyah and Halabjah, and spoke to the media, urging voters to participate in the polls and highlighting the importance of strengthening and consolidating the democratic processes in the Kurdistan Region. Following his visit to the polling stations, my Special Representative met with the Board of Commissioners of the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission, who expressed appreciation and requested that United Nations electoral support be continued.

42. At the close of the submission period, a total of 1,045 complaints were submitted concerning the parliamentary elections of 30 September and the special voting of the security forces that took place on 28 September. A special panel was formed by the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission to process those complaints, with UNAMI providing advice on methodology. On 4 October, the Commission released a partial tally of the votes, based on 85 per cent of the ballot, indicating the votes garnered by the political entities that ran in the elections. Data entry of the results regarding entities and their candidates is ongoing, with the Commission aiming to announce the full results once all ballots are tabulated and the Commission completes the review and adjudication of all the complaints.

C. Human rights and rule of law developments and activities

43. Civilian casualties from 9 August to 9 October totalled 281: 96 killed, including 6 women, and 185 wounded, including 8 women. That was a far lower number than during the same period in 2017, when 708 civilian casualties were recorded (266 killed and 442 wounded). The leading cause of civilian casualties during the reporting period was improvised explosive devices. Such attacks, often claimed by ISIL, pose a threat to civilians in Baghdad, Salah al-Din, Ninawa, Kirkuk, Diyala, Anbar and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. Another leading cause of civilian casualties was small arms fire.

44. ISIL continued to kill and wound civilians, police and members of popular mobilization forces in Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. On 18 August, in Bayya', south-western Baghdad, ISIL claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device attack on public transport that killed three and wounded

eight more. On 10 August, at a football game in Sharqat district of Salah al-Din Governorate, ISIL gunmen shot and killed five civilians and wounded six others, including two children. In Baghdad, six explosions were carried out by unknown persons in a one-week period, killing 6 civilians and wounding 16.

45. The Iraqi authorities conducted a series of raids in and around Mosul, arresting and killing several ISIL fighters, including women fighters. Iraqi authorities also found an ISIL explosives factory in Sinjar district. On 13 August, local police arrested five Iraqi women suspected of being affiliated with ISIL at their home in the Amin neighbourhood in eastern Mosul. On 26 August, local police arrested 41 individuals, including five women, suspected of affiliation with ISIL, in the Badush and Qayyarah subdistricts of Mosul.

46. In Kirkuk and Ninawa Governorates, ISIL continued to target and kill local mayors, accusing those officials of providing information on their movements to the Government. Between 1 January and 18 August, in Ninawa Governorate, seven mayors were killed and two others wounded. On 15 August, an armed group shot and killed the mayor of the Tall al-Rumman neighbourhood in western Mosul. Similarly, on 17 August, two masked gunmen on a motorbike shot and killed the mayor of the Yarmuk neighbourhood in western Mosul.

47. Since June 2014, UNAMI has received reports of 202 mass graves, the overwhelming majority of which reportedly contain victims of ISIL. Current estimates provided to UNAMI range from 6,000 to more than 12,000 victims. UNAMI continues to advocate for the appropriate protection of the mass graves to collect, secure and preserve the evidence. In addition, UNAMI recommends that information on missing persons be centralized and greater transparency be provided with regard to the families of the missing.

48. Iraqi courts continued to issue death sentences for terrorism-related crimes. On 13 August, the Ninawa Criminal Court in Mosul sentenced an ISIL fighter to death for killing security personnel and improvised explosive device attacks in Ninawa Governorate in 2014. On 15 August, the court imposed life sentences on three defendants for providing logistical support to ISIL in Ninawa. On 16 August, the Salah al-Din Criminal Court sentenced one man to death for participating in the killing of the Police Chief of Dulu'iyah. According to the Supreme Judicial Council, as of the time of writing, 100 persons have been sentenced to death in 2018: 24 women (23 of them foreigners, including 17 from Turkey, 3 from Kyrgyzstan, 2 from Azerbaijan and 1 from Germany) and 76 men. On 16 August, the Ministry of Justice announced the execution of six defendants, without further details. That brought the total number of executions publicly announced in 2018 by the Ministry of Justice to 32. UNAMI has made repeated requests to the Ministry of Justice for more details regarding death sentences and executions, to no avail.

49. On 29 August, the Department of Yazidi Affairs in the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in the Kurdistan Regional Government reported that of the 6,417 Yazidis (3,548 women and 2,869 men) abducted by ISIL since August 2014, fewer than half have been freed or escaped. On the same day, the Department also reported that 3,095 Yazidis (1,845 children and 1,250 women) remained in ISIL captivity or were missing. No men remain in ISIL captivity. Those abducted have either escaped or been freed, or have been executed by ISIL.

50. Bodies of civilians continued to be recovered from the rubble in Mosul. The civilian defence corps informed UNAMI that 4,514 bodies, all civilians, had been recovered as of the time of writing.

51. UNAMI continued its monitoring of trials in Iraq (including those of alleged ISIL members) and remains concerned about the lack of consistent adherence to the

requirements of due process and a fair trial, in particular the failure of the courts to investigate allegations by defendants that confessions were obtained through torture or other forms of ill-treatment and the passive role played by defence counsel, thus undermining a defendant's right to effective counsel.

52. UNAMI continued its engagement on ISIL accountability. UNAMI provided assistance to the Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to support Iraqi efforts to hold the group accountable for its crimes committed in Iraq. During the first visit of the Special Adviser to Iraq, from 6 to 14 August, UNAMI staff briefed the Special Adviser on their concerns regarding the country's compliance with national law and international human rights law and standards. UNAMI also supported the Special Adviser's meetings with key government actors, judicial officials, civil society, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Commission on Missing Persons.

53. During the reporting period, public protests continued in 10 governorates with regard to the lack of employment opportunities and basic services and the ubiquity of corruption. According to the Independent High Commission for Human Rights, reported casualties between 9 August and 3 October from the Basrah demonstrations reached 18 civilians killed (17 men and 1 woman), 155 civilians injured (all men) and 43 members of the security forces injured. On 6 September, the bodies of four men were received by the Forensic Department in Jamhouriyah Hospital in Basrah. According to several reports, three of them had been shot in the head. On 25 September, Suad Habeeb Lijlaj al-Ali, a human rights activist, was killed in the Abbasiyah area of Basrah. UNAMI has been calling for prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into those killings. Since 1 September, according to the Independent High Commission for Human Rights, 27 men have been arrested in Basrah for participating in demonstrations; 18 of them have been released, but the remaining 9 are being detained under judicial orders. UNAMI continues to monitor the issue of access by families to their relatives in detention in Basrah.

54. On 14 August, the Independent High Commission for Human Rights and authorities in the Kurdistan Region met and agreed, in accordance with Law No. 53 of 2008 of the Commission, to open a regional office affiliated with the Commission in Erbil. Attempts in 2012 to open such an office were prevented by the conditions prevailing in the country.

55. The country task force on monitoring and reporting, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund, verified 16 grave violations against children that resulted in the killing of 3 boys and 4 girls and the maiming of 14 boys and 4 girls. The incidents mainly related to explosive hazards and weapons in Anbar, Karbala', Kirkuk, Ninawa and Dhi Qar Governorates. There were also four additional incidents of killing and maiming which have been reported but not yet verified. During the reporting period, the country task force initiated discussions with the Government and submitted for consideration a draft action plan to prevent and end the recruitment and use of children by the popular mobilization forces. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs communicated that they would revert with comments and feedback after formation of the new Government.

56. The Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements Technical Working Group on conflict-related sexual violence has increased its efforts to analyse trends and patterns on conflict-related sexual violence, with a view to enhancing coordination in programmatic responses, advocacy and accountability. To that end, on 16 August, the Working Group undertook a mission to an internally displaced persons camp in Ninawa Governorate to examine the extent to which indicators on

conflict-related sexual violence were prevalent in the camp, identify gaps in response to conflict-related sexual violence and propose recommendations.

D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

57. The humanitarian context in Iraq is entering a new stage. More than 1.8 million people remain displaced inside Iraq, and many express an unwillingness to return to their areas of origin owing to concerns regarding security and community reconciliation, the destruction of property, insufficient services and livelihoods and the lack of progress in clearing explosive hazards. While the decline in the number of internally displaced persons to less than 2 million (after a high of more than 5 million) is a significant achievement, the focus must now be placed on integration and resettlement into third locations inside Iraq. Additional attention and resources also need to be directed towards prioritizing the cases of internally displaced persons who need protection, especially with regard to families who have perceived ISIL affiliations.

58. Humanitarian actors reached 382,621 vulnerable Iraqis with some form of humanitarian assistance during the reporting period. Some partners reported that delays in disbursements and shortages in funding continued to negatively affect their programming; by the end of August, the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan had received only $343 million (60 per cent) of the $569 million requested.

59. With regard to stabilization, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Funding Facility for Stabilization reached a new milestone by completing more than 1,200 projects across all major sectors in 31 areas of operation. Hospitals in Ramadi and Fallujah are now under construction, and together will support nearly a million women, children and men in Anbar Governorate. The second phase of the Hamdaniyah Hospital in Ninawa is under way, while the completed surgical wards, maternity ward and other repaired facilities are already in operation. Outside the health sector, bridges were an important focus for expanded stabilization during the reporting period, with the completion of the iconic Fallujah Iron Bridge, following the removal by experts from the Mine Action Service of explosive hazards found underwater. Repairs to another three major bridges are ongoing in Fallujah and Ramadi. UNDP has also begun a vital housing project to support returnees in western Mosul.

60. The United Nations country team continued to support longer-term recovery and reconstruction efforts. The recovery and resilience programme, established at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq in February 2018, finalized its results framework to define expected impacts in four key development areas. In addition, the programme's terms of reference for its funding mechanism were drafted in close coordination with the Government of Iraq, the World Bank and the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office.

61. In September 2018, my Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Affairs and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator participated in an international conference for the rehabilitation of the city of Mosul entitled "Revive the spirit of Mosul", organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of Iraq, in Paris. During the conference, a high-level initiative to support the reconstruction of heritage sites and the revival of cultural life and educational institutions in Mosul was launched. The United Arab Emirates has funded the ongoing restoration and reconstruction of the Nuri mosque and its Hadba' minaret.

62. UNDP is also establishing and maintaining local peace committees in Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Anbar and Diyala Governorates. During August, training sessions on

conflict management and mediation were delivered to four of those committees, targeting 100 community leaders (with a focus on minorities), to strengthen skills and capacities for community reconciliation at the local level.

63. Also in August, UNDP began a pilot project with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to collect stories from women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in newly liberated areas. The initiative will develop a new therapeutic approach to support victims and provide information to the Government of Iraq as it refines its social protection and transitional justice policies.

64. From 3 to 5 September, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Government of Iraq and the Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster rolled out inter-agency standard operating procedures for gender-based violence in the south-central region of Iraq. They consist of guiding principles, procedures, roles and responsibilities for all actors in Iraq with regard to preventing and responding to gender-based violence; they also facilitate coordination and referrals to provide the immediate support that survivors of gender-based violence need. In addition, from 9 to 19 September UNFPA held a second stage of training to strengthen the capacity of the staff of women's shelters.

65. In August, the Mine Action Service began a 15-week training on the disposal of explosive ordnance improvised explosive devices for police officers from Diyala, Ninawa, Anbar, Muthanna, Salah al-Din, Wasit and Kirkuk Governorates to increase the capacity of the Government to provide critical life-saving responses to suspected explosive hazards in affected liberated areas.

66. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations supported the rehabilitation of land and agricultural infrastructure for 4,000 conflict-affected people in 12 villages in Salah al-Din and Ninawa Governorates. That work has allowed farming activities to resume and introduced cash flows that have revitalized local markets and involved local communities to ensure sustainable results.

67. More traditional development work is increasingly building on stabilization, recovery and reconciliation. In August, the United Nations country team established a programme management team to better coordinate development activities across the United Nations system in Iraq. In response to the growing public demand for employment opportunities, the country team also formed a working group on job creation and livelihoods, which is co-chaired by UNDP and the World Bank.

68. On 5 September, UNESCO and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched, for the first time in Iraq, a national competency-based training programme targeting 300 young people, one third of them women, that meets the requirements of an agreed technical and vocational qualifications framework for Iraq. The training is focused on practical skills and, over the course of six months, will lead to recognized qualifications aligned to the needs of the labour market.

69. As the Government rebuilds its health systems, the World Health Organization (WHO) is working closely with the Government through the Ministry of Health and other line ministries to agree on an action plan for the period 2018–2021. The plan will define priority areas where WHO will support the Government in rebuilding health systems that can substantially contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 3 on ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages, with three interlinked strategic priorities to achieve universal health coverage, address health emergencies and promote healthier populations.

70. UNDP extended technical and financial support to the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government on the Sustainable Development Goals. At the federal level, in early August UNDP and the Ministry of Planning began a new project

that focuses on the localization of the Goals with a view to channelling assistance on the Goals across Iraq at the national and subnational levels.

71. In August, the International Organization for Migration finalized a demographic survey of the Kurdistan Region in partnership with the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Planning and UNFPA. The survey provides a comprehensive profile of the current population's demographics, including employment and income, housing, household possessions and literacy and education levels. The survey will support the capacity of the Government to shape its policies and deliver effective services to citizens.

72. Finally, UNDP held a national consultation in support of the efforts of the Government of Iraq to draft a strategy on critical infrastructure protection. The objective is to put in place capacities and systems to ensure that the country's major facilities and important installations are protected from any form of risks triggered by natural, human-caused or technological hazards and security threats.

E. Security and operational issues

73. The United Nations in Iraq continued to implement robust security risk mitigation measures to provide maximum safety and security to its agencies in the delivery of their programmes in a constantly fluid security environment. Mandatory security support for its political, humanitarian and development engagements and activities in the country remained closely coordinated with the Government of Iraq. The result of that strengthened coordination has been the successful provision of security to United Nations operations and personnel.

74. The implementation of the recommendations of the independent external review continued. The review of the function and staffing of the Integrated Coordination Office for Development and Humanitarian Affairs was completed in July and has led to a refocusing of the tasks of the Office of the Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Affairs and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. In that context UNAMI has identified areas for potential efficiencies, to be presented as appropriate to the relevant United Nations budgetary bodies. In response to the review's recommendations on establishing integrated teams, UNAMI and the United Nations country team are working more collaboratively by including representatives in their respective planning and strategy groups, such as the operations management team of the United Nations country team; strategy sessions on the crisis in the south of Iraq; the joint country team and UNAMI task force on coordination, common action and information-sharing; and a joint assessment mission which recently concluded the review of United Nations security architecture, pending the finalization of its report.

75. In support of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), the Mission has secured the Government's agreement to refurbish and reallocate an existing building in the International Zone, currently managed by UNAMI, to the Investigative Team. Simultaneously, the Mission has begun the procurement process needed to start renovating the structure, in coordination with and at the request of the Investigative Team.

76. Regarding progress made on the integrated United Nations compound in Baghdad, the construction of residential building "C" is likely to be completed by December 2018. That will add 116 accommodation units for staff. Meanwhile, a contract has been issued for the construction of a new office building that is expected to be completed by March 2020, providing 228 additional workstations for UNAMI and the United Nations country team.

77. The United Nations system has agreed on a local cost-sharing budget that will include the expenses of the United Nations Guard Unit: the Mission will cover 70 per cent of the Unit's costs, while the United Nations country team will cover 30 per cent. The costs are expected to be offset by contributions to common security arrangements made by the Investigative Team once it is deployed.

IV. Observations

78. I congratulate Nadia Murad for being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, a recognition she receives on behalf of all Yazidi and other Iraqis who were victims of and gravely suffered from the atrocities committed by ISIL. That recognition gives impetus to the efforts to locate the more than 1,000 Yazidi and other women and children who remain missing after their kidnapping by ISIL, and to the efforts to hold accountable those responsible for those crimes.

79. I congratulate the people of Iraq on the completion of their 2018 national electoral process, paving the way for the ongoing process of government formation. The orderly, smooth conduct of the recount and subsequent processes showcases the capacity within Iraqi institutions to address electoral-related complaints and appeals in line with established constitutional and legal parameters. I commend the efforts of the Independent High Electoral Commission staff and the Board of Judges on the partial manual recount process and welcome the certification by the Federal Supreme Court of the 2018 parliamentary election results. With the electoral process completed, it is now time for the country's electoral and other institutions to review lessons learned from recent experiences, with the aim of taking forward electoral-related reforms that meet public expectations. The United Nations remains available to support and engage with those processes.

80. The first Council of Representatives session held on 3 September, in accordance with the constitutional time frame, was a positive step towards establishing the new Government. I urge all political actors to remain committed to upholding peace and completing the formation of the Government in accordance with constitutional and legal provisions. I urge all political leaders, including the newly elected Council of Representatives and Prime Minister-designate, to act without delay in taking all the necessary steps to establish a new national, pro-reform Government that will effectively respond to people's longstanding needs and deliver on their valid demands.

81. I welcome the smooth, democratic election of the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, the election of Barham Salih as President of Iraq and the appointment of Adil Abdul-Mahdi as the Prime Minister-designate. The United Nations looks forward to working with the new constitutional leadership, the Council of Representatives and the future Governments in Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region. At the same time, I regret that none of the eminently qualified female political figures have so far been elected to senior leadership positions and I urge members of the Council of Representatives and political leaders to be true to their pledges and to elect women to senior leadership positions in the Council of Representatives and the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region, as well as future Governments in Baghdad and Erbil.

82. I note with grave concern the public service crisis in Basrah and other southern governorates, deplore the violence during protests and regret the casualties. I urge calm and call upon the authorities to avoid using disproportionate force against the demonstrators, provide the necessary protection for the people of Basrah and other governorates, ensure human rights while protecting law and order and investigate and hold accountable those responsible for the outbreak of violence. I call upon the

Government of Iraq to do its utmost to respond to the people's rightful demands for clean water and electricity supplies, as a matter of urgency.

83. Following the Iraqi parliamentary elections of 12 May, relations between Baghdad and Erbil have displayed a positive trend. The elections provided Kurdistan political parties with an opportunity to participate constructively in the national political process. The federal Government continued to pay part of the salaries of civil servants in the Kurdistan Region and reopened the main road between Erbil and Kirkuk. However, many political issues have yet to be resolved. I am encouraged by the level of communication between Baghdad and Erbil during the government formation process, the commitment of both sides to expedite that process and the desire to resolve their outstanding issues on the basis of the Iraqi Constitution.

84. I emphasize that UNAMI remains strongly committed to providing all possible support to the Iraqi people, as well as to the Government of Iraq, in their quest to form an inclusive, non-sectarian and pro-reform Government. It is imperative that Iraq be allowed to pursue its own national interests in the process of government formation and not become a proxy theatre for confrontation by regional interests. Given the current social and economic pressures that the Government of Iraq is facing, I repeat my previous calls for all pledges made at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, held in February 2018, to be honoured.

85. I would like to thank my outgoing Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Ján Kubiš, for his service at a challenging time in the country and the region. I would also like to express my gratitude to the national and international staff of UNAMI for their continued efforts in implementing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq.